



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

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For Immediate Release

**Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services
Outlines Preparedness Plans for Bird Flu**

Response Plan Has Been in Place Since 2001 - State's Criteria for Testing Exceeds CDC Recommendations

(MADISON – October 14, 2005)— In light of recent national attention given to cases of bird flu, the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services has announced that Wisconsin has preparedness plans in place should any cases be detected in the United States.

“The federal government has been talking about preparedness for the past few weeks, but Wisconsin created a response plan to a possible influenza pandemic in 2001,” says Secretary Helene Nelson. “We will continue to monitor this situation and adjust our preparedness plans as necessary.”

Wisconsin is testing sick individuals for bird flu if there is a possibility they were exposed to the virus, such as travelers who recently returned from Southeast Asia and are now exhibiting flu-like symptoms. The state's criteria for testing people for bird flu exceed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations. Since January 2004, Wisconsin has tested 17 people that have met the criteria and none of them tested positive for the bird flu.

Wisconsin's response to a possible pandemic involves continued surveillance for the virus, infection control and sufficient medical services. It also defines the role of state and local government in order to help control the spread of bird flu.

Communities throughout the state have already been performing preparation exercises if a bird flu pandemic should occur.

The Department of Health and Family Services reinforces that there are currently no cases of bird flu in the United States. The Department is actively looking for cases in Wisconsin and has plans in place to respond to the bird flu (avian influenza – H5N1) if either human or animal cases are discovered. Health officials are monitoring for sustained human to human spread of this bird flu virus.

The bird flu strain that has been detected in Southeast Asia is *not* the same as the typical influenza virus that circulates each year in Wisconsin. The strain in Southeast Asia is a type of influenza virus that can infect birds, but usually does not infect people. The World Health Organization has reported 117 confirmed human cases of bird flu in Southeast Asia due to contact with infected birds from January 1, 2004, to October 10, 2005.

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A pandemic occurs when a virus makes a significant change in its strain and is then able to spread easily and quickly from person to person over a large geographic area. The last actual pandemic occurred in 1968 with the Hong Kong flu.

Visit http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/preparedness/pdf_files/WIPandemicInfluenzaPlan.pdf to view Wisconsin's influenza pandemic plan.

For additional information about bird flu, see:

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/>
- World Health Organization at <http://www.who.int/en/>

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